



WOMEN VETERANS' NETWORK

In Memoriam: Captain Jennifer Harris, USMC

On February 7, 2007, Captain Jennifer Harris, a Marine helicopter pilot, a Naval Academy Graduate, became the first female from Massachusetts to be killed-in-action since the War on Terror began. She died while piloting her CH-46E Sea Knight helicopter north of Baghdad during her third tour of duty. She was laid to rest in her hometown of Swampscott on February 19, with full military honors.

Captain Harris may be the first Massachusetts woman to die in the line of duty in this war, but she certainly is not the first to serve. The estimate for the number of Massachusetts women ever deployed for Global War on Terror service is around 2,350 (CTS Deployment File as of 31Dec06). With the number of active duty women on the rise, we can expect to see more women returning from combat seeking veterans' benefits. Do you know a woman veteran—or a woman who is currently serving? If so, please thank her for her service and ask her if she knows about the Women Veterans' Network. The Network keeps women informed of their veterans' benefits and services.

Two Outstanding Women Veterans



(left-right) Lillian J. Eaton and Marybeth O'Sullivan

On November 8, 2006, two Massachusetts women were nominated and selected as Outstanding Women Veterans at the State House. Lillian J. Eaton of Amesbury was honored for her service in the Navy during World War II and her lifelong commitment to helping veterans in her community. Marybeth O'Sullivan of Brockton began her military career after completing nursing school when she entered the Naval Reserves in 1982; she continues to serve in the Naval Reserves.

The Outstanding Woman Veteran Award will be presented in November. Nomination information forthcoming.

A Message from Heidi



(left-right) Pat Robinson and Heidi Kruckenberg at the Women Are Veterans Too! event in November at the State House

The Women Veterans' Network steering committee meeting in January was bittersweet. Bitter because we said farewell to Pat Robinson, Women Veterans Program Manager at the VA Boston Healthcare System. And sweet because the committee

welcomed a handful of new members. Pat Robinson has worked with women veterans for the past fifteen years. The VA Boston received funding to establish a women veterans' health center at the Jamaica Plain campus in 1992, the year Pat was hired. Pat's efforts to build and develop the women's program and health center cannot be underestimated. Her vision, determination, and energy have benefited thousands of women veterans over the past fifteen years. Pat is moving on to another position in the VA Boston where she will work with chronically mentally ill veterans—both male and female. She will certainly be missed by women veterans and her colleagues.

Saying good-bye to Pat was tempered by the excitement of meeting new steering committee members. Carlene Arambula, Jessica Fisher, Debra Freed, Lana Headley, Mary Jane Letizia, Jo Ann Murphy, June Newman, Toni Phillips, and Diane Ramsay have joined the committee. They bring a variety of experiences and areas of expertise as well as represent diverse locations across the state. The committee is thrilled to have new members to help get the word out to women veterans statewide. With new members hailing from One-Stop Career Centers and local Veterans' Services offices, we hope to build stronger bridges between services for women.

Heidi Kruckenberg—Women's Coordinator

VA Updates

Vet to Vet Group for Women at Jamaica Plain VA



(left-right) Doris King and Darlene Saunders facilitate the Vet to Vet group for women

Vet to Vet is a mutual support group for women veterans. The mission of this group is to help veterans help themselves and each other. Vet to Vet is facilitated by two volunteer women veterans who are not therapists nor VA staff. The meetings are well-organized and follow the

Pathways to Recovery self-help workbook. The book addresses how women can use their strength and resources to set goals to aid in their recovery. The meetings start with a mindfulness exercise and end with a song. Different topics are discussed and there are occasionally guest speakers. The volunteer facilitators welcome suggestions and invite new members.

The Vet to Vet group has been meeting weekly since early December 2006. The Women's Vet to Vet group meets every Thursday from 1:00 to 2:00 PM at the Jamaica Plain VA Campus, Fourth floor Room C-12. All women veterans are invited to join the group. For more information, please call 857-364-6396.

by Doris King (USMC) and Darlene Saunders (USA)

Healthcare for Women in Worcester

Did you know that the VA operates 17 outpatient clinics across the state? The diverse locations serve communities from Nantucket to Pittsfield and from Hyannis to Fitchburg and more. Because different clinics offer different services, contact the local clinic for more information. To find an outpatient clinic nearby, visit the VA website at www.va.gov or call 781-687-4821.

One such clinic is on Lincoln Street in Worcester. The Worcester Community Based Outpatient Clinic offers full medical and mental health services for veterans. The physicians at the Worcester clinic are sensitive to women's issues and offer excellent primary care. There are female therapists and Nurse Practitioners, as well as a monthly women's clinic with Diane Harness-DiGloria, NP the Women Veterans' Program Manager with the VA Boston Healthcare System. For more information and to make an appointment, call the Worcester clinic at 508-856-0104.

Welcome Baby Veteran

On a sunny winter day at the Brockton Women's Health Center ten women Marines surprised the proud mom of baby Sophia Estela Mendoza with a lovely baby basket loaded with goodies. Sophia was born on December 17th at the South Shore Hospital. Her proud parents are Renee and Alejandro Mendoza.

Renee is an Iraqi Freedom veteran and a member of the Army HHB 42nd Division Artillery from Rehoboth, MA. She served as Commander of 175 soldiers in Iraq from October 2004 through October 2005.

Diane Harness-DiGloria, Women Veterans Program Manager attended a VISN conference and heard about the Welcome Baby program that originated at the West Haven VA. The idea is based on the traditional welcome wagon concept when one moves into a new community. The basket includes baby basics, toys, handmade quilts and clothes, books, and even treats for mom.

The Women Marines Association, Bay State Chapter MA-1 organized the event with the Brockton Women's Health Center. Members presenting the basket to Renee were: Jean Jackman, Eleanor Canty, Kay Carpenter, Pat Morrisette, Velma Mooney, Betty Hughes, Micaila Britto, Ruth Sullivan, Barbara Signor, and Elizabeth Denekamp.

VA provides fee-basis maternity care in the community for all eligible women veterans. Any service organization interested in participating in the program can contact Diane Harness-DiGloria at 774-826-1435.

Aid and Attendance an Underused Benefit

The VA is reaching out to inform wartime veterans and surviving spouses of deceased wartime veterans about special monthly pension benefit called Aid and Attendance. Although this is not a new program, not everyone is aware of it. The Aid and Attendance pension benefit may be available to wartime veterans and surviving spouses who have in-home care, live in nursing homes or in assisted-living facilities. Many elderly veterans and surviving spouses whose incomes are above the congressionally mandated legal limit for a VA pension may still be eligible for the special monthly Aid and Attendance benefit if they have large medical expenses, including nursing home expenses, for which they do not receive reimbursement. To qualify, claimants must be incapable of self-support and in need of regular personal assistance.

For more information, call the VA, 1-800-827-1000.

Source: VA Press Release, December 19, 2006

News & Updates

Women's Legion Post Reorganizing in Western Massachusetts

Pioneer Valley Women's Legion Post 463, based in Springfield, is being reorganized to reach out to the increasing numbers of military women returning from duty in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The post, one of only three in Massachusetts specifically for women, was started about 12 years ago and draws membership from throughout Western Massachusetts.

Elizabeth Brewer of South Hadley, the new post commander, said it is important for military women to have a support group that understands their specific needs. "Some of these young people feel lost in a traditional Legion post with a predominantly male membership and are often reluctant to discuss personal problems such as health or finances," she said. "We can answer many of their questions," Brewer continued, "and if we can't, we can tell them where to find help."

Apart from benefits relating to health or finances there is also help available for education, mortgages, and bonuses for active service. The Legion also offers veterans an opportunity to have an impact on their community through participation in a wide range of activities such as working with young people in scouting or school programs, helping hospitalized veterans, supporting scholarship opportunities, and many others.

Post 463 meets in GAR Hall, Columbus Avenue, on Court Square, Springfield. For more information, contact post commander Elizabeth Brewer (413-533-8918 or jeb0229@yahoo.com).

Tribute to Women Veterans in Holyoke

The American Legion, Department of Massachusetts is presenting a Tribute to Women Veterans on **March 25, 2007**. It will be held at the Holyoke Soldiers' Home, Holyoke, MA at 3 PM. The keynote address will be given by East Longmeadow resident, Major Margaret Oglesby (Massachusetts Army National Guard) who served in Afghanistan for nine months in 2003. The event is free and open to the public.

For more information, call Marge Cavanaugh, Department Executive Committeewoman, the American Legion of Massachusetts (413-283-6448).

Housing First Model Is Alternative to Emergency Shelter

"Housing" is what 40 women staying at the shelter at Father Bill's Place said when asked by the staff, "What can we do to help you?" This unanimous, yet simple response, given three years ago, started a chain reaction. It led to the realization that the services being provided within the emergency shelter could just as easily be provided to persons residing in housing. This realization led to the creation of **Claremont House**. Father Bill's Place in Quincy, MA, has been moving steadily towards providing permanent housing with supportive services rather than emergency shelter as a solution to ending homelessness.

In May 2005 Claremont House opened its doors. This harm reduction model serves as an alternative to emergency shelter by providing "housing first" to 12 women with long histories of homelessness. These are the women most likely to be victimized. They struggle with issues of serious mental illness, substance abuse, poor health, and domestic abuse. The concept is simple: end homelessness immediately regardless of income, history and/or compliance and then provide intensive support services to address individual needs.

One of the first residents of Claremont House said, "Moving here saved my life. It really did. I never ever thought that I would be homeless ever in my life. I walked around all night in Boston because I was too afraid to sleep." Another said, "[I] don't have to wait in line for food anymore. [I] can go to bed anytime." By meeting a persons' basic need—housing—dignity has been regained and 12 women now have a place to call home.

For more information, please call 617-376-2255.

by John Yazwinski, Father Bill's Place

WIMSA 10th Anniversary Celebration to Be Held in October 2007

The Women's Memorial Foundation (WIMSA) will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Memorial's dedication in October 2007. Plans are underway to bring you a weekend of exciting events to commemorate this milestone, including a gala dinner, anniversary program, service reunions, and a candlelight march.

As always, for the most up-to-date information about anniversary events and visitor information, check our website: www.womensmemorial.org.

Source: WIMSA website, www.womensmemorial.org

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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Substance Use Disorder Residential Treatment Program



*(left-right) Karen A. Guthrie
and Sharon L. Baker*

The National Center for PTSD, Women's Division, which is part of VA Boston Healthcare System, is pleased to offer a new program at the Brockton campus. The **Women's Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)-Substance Use**

Disorder (SUD) Residential Treatment Program is the first program of its kind to offer integrated treatment specifically for women veterans with both disorders.

We have known for some time that having both PTSD and SUD makes it harder to recover from either of these disorders and that integrated therapies which address both problems are highly effective. The treatment team has a specialized knowledge of integrated therapies for PTSD and SUD as well as other addictions.

Designed to fill the gap between short-term inpatient and long-term outpatient and residential programs, the

program will offer approximately eight weeks of specialized, intensive treatment based on individual needs and strengths. The primary goal is to help women develop skills to maintain abstinence and manage PTSD symptoms. Veterans will have the opportunity to address specific trauma issues, including military sexual trauma. Other important issues such as medical, vocational, housing, family, and interpersonal problems will also be addressed as participants are encouraged to develop short- and long-term plans for their own recovery.

While the program takes into consideration each veteran's needs and preferences for treatment, all women entering the program must make a commitment to work on both PTSD and SUD, regardless of which one may be the primary problem at the time of admission. The program provides a residential setting where women veterans can safely begin this challenging process through a combination of group and individual therapies, educational activities, and medication management.

In anticipation of a Spring 2007 opening, the program is beginning to screen applicants for admission. For more information, please call 774-826-1833.

by Sharon L. Baker, Ph.D., Clinical Director and Karen A. Guthrie, LICSW, Social Worker